DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 242 420 PS 014 254

AUTHOR Wood, Robert C.
TITLE The Twentieth Century Fund's "Making the Grade."
PUB DATE 8 Dec 83
NOTE 7p.; Summary outline of remarks of paper presented at the National Forum on Excellence in Education (Indianapolis, IN, December 6-8, 1983).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Educational Improvement; Elementary Secondary Education; *Federal Government; *Government Role
IDENTIFIERS *Twentieth Century Fund

ABSTRACT

Misconceptions contained in reports about the condition of education in the United States are pointed out, and issues omitted from the reports are indicated. Subsequently, the Twentieth Century Fund and its task force are briefly described; in addition, two basic strategic points about which task force members were in agreement concerning American schools and the role of the federal government, are disclosed. Concerning the federal role, three goals considered clear and obligatory are specified. In conclusion, eight recommendations for federal action are offered, and the importance of the federal role in education is emphasized. (RH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED242420

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
X Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND'S "MAKING THE GRADE"

NATIONAL FORUM ON EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

ASSEMBLY ON STANDARDS AND EXPECTATIONS

Summary Outline of Remarks

Robert C. Wood

The Henry R. Luce Professor of Democratic Institutions
and the Social Order
Wesleyan University
Middletown, Connecticut

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Robert C. Wood
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

December 8, 1983

PS 014254

1. The avalanche of last spring's reports has yielded an even larger avalanche of commentary that contain four major misconceptions:

   -- A new emphasis on quality, largely cognitive and frequently assuming a college-bound student body, implies less emphasis on equality and continued access.

   -- The real villian in the educational drama is the teacher. Administrators, parents, public officials, the public at large are largely held harmless.

   -- Effective educational reform can be cost free, achieved without allocating more resources to the enterprise.

   -- Effective educational reform can be achieved quickly; substantial benefits can be realized by "quick fixes" -- more competency regulations, master teachers, curricula changes to emphasize science, mathematics and computers.

2. These conclusions cannot fairly be derived, media editorials to the contrary notwithstanding, from the main themes and theses of the major reports we consider today. While the scope and emphasis of the reports vary, while important issues are omitted, they do not suggest

   -- that a crucial unfinished item on the National Educational Agenda -- access -- should be sacrificed by a concern with higher standards,

   -- that a legitimate concern for the condition of teaching should obscure the fact that major improvements in schools and administrations are required as well as the performance of school boards and committees, mayors, state and Federal elected officials,

   -- that the compensation of teachers, as well as other educational professionals not be made competitive, at least, for example, at a par with our neighbors in Canada -- and that will cost money,

-- that educational reform is not institutional in character, long-haul, involving basic sometimes wrenching institutional changes, and that those who support it must sign on for the duration.

3. Those misconceptions corrected, let me briefly highlight the background deliberations and conclusions of the Twentieth Century Task Force.

-- As to background, the Fund is an independent research foundation, established by the great Boston merchant Edward Filene. Its Board determines an issue of importance, its staff makes a preliminary reconnaissance, a task force of diverse views is established, and then it proceeds entirely independently. In our case, our membership ranged from right to left -- Checker Finn and Diane Ravitch to Wilson Riles and Carlos Hartos, with a solid center of professionals such as Patricia Graham and Robert Wentz. Paul Peterson, late of the University of Chicago, now of Brookings Institute was our able rapporteur. And we had as other panels have, our Nobel Prize winner, to demonstrate once again that the farther a Nobel laureate ventures from his or her field of special excellence, the more certain and dogmatic become the views. Free, argumentative free-wheeling, but in the end close to consensus.

4. Consensus on two basic strategic points

-- that American schools are indeed in trouble. We did not use the purple prose of crisis. But we did say, deep trouble,

-- that there is a clear Federal role -- in three ways -- but that it has been misguided.

-- that there is a clear Federal role -- in at least three ways -- but that it has been misdirected.

5. The three unmistakable Federal obligations are these:

-- ensuring equality through the simple justice of the 14th Amendment. There is the inescapable Constitutional responsibility which the Courts have mandated since Brown I and II after the Executive and Legislative branches failed to do so,

-- to anticipate and accomodate the educational consequences of national immigration policy. It is the Federal government that decides whom we shall welcome across our borders. And as the newcomers settle with concentrated impact, especially in the West and Southwest, it is the Federal government which must cushion the local impact,

-- to assure national economic well-being and prosperity. And this means a cultivation and development of human resources -- our children -- on whom our well-being and prosperity ultimately depend.

6. Given those obligations, the Task Force concluded that Federal policy shift from a regulatory posture -- in its various compensatory programs -- to one of incentives.

7. Accordingly, it recommended eight specific Federal Actions.

(1) Incentives for teachers -- in a Federally supported, state and local administered Master Teacher program, to include staff development, graduate work, and guidance of entering teachers. Could range to compensation of $42,000 per Master Teacher -- perhaps a total cost of $5 billion, but certainly worth the equivalent of a nuclear aircraft carrier.

(2) Incentives to ensure primacy of the English Language. We did not specify the pedagogy of bilingualism; we did specify the outcome: command of English, believing that no child will have a crack at the action, a fair break, without such competence.

(3) Incentives for all our children to command a second language. We are ashamed that as a nation we remain so inferior to our neighbors on the other continents to communicate with them in their languages as well as in our own.

(4) Incentives for renewed emphasis in science and mathematics. With the other reports, we regarded this as critical to our economic well-being.

(5) Incentives to assure equivalent emphasis for equality: continuation of the compensatory programs for the poor, those with special needs, those who enter America speaking another language.

(6) Special aid for impacted areas of two kinds: those localities with a large influx of newcomers; those localities left in the backwaters of economic development, that have no means to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps.

(7) Redirection of Federal research: to emphasize fundamental research on the human learning process, on performance measures and on honest evaluations of experimental programs.

(8) Federal fellowships for the exceptional students, both advanced and slow in the learning process in small and special academies within the public school systems.

Accordingly, we rejected the voucher proposal.

We rejected tax credits.

We remained committed to the public schools.

We omitted vital areas, in the constraint of time and resource:

Vocational Education

Early Childhood

Private Sector Involvement

Reform of School Administrations

But we hoped that our essential message could be heard:

-- that while the states and localities are the prime actors in education the Federal role is critical to achieve quality and equality together, and more important

-- that there is no greater national purpose than the assurance of effective, universal education. Essential to the Constitutional declaration of purpose: to provide for the common defense, to insure domestic tranquality and to promote the general welfare.

Until and unless the educational profession is restored to its proper place of respect and prestige, none of these Constitutional purposes are secure. And we are all at fault.